

How Could You?

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Summary: To everyone, including Stoic the painting was marvelous. To Hiccup, it felt like one thousand daggers had just been plunged into his heart. THIS STORY IS INSPIRED BY "Riders of Berk episode 8"

How Could You?

The moment Bucket revealed the painting, Hiccup felt his heart sink. His eyes grew wide as he felt heat rush to his cheeks. The mural on the shield was of him with his father. But something wasn't right. The young boy in the pictures was not Hiccup. The shield had a simple picture of a very proud Stoic, hand on Hiccup's burly shoulder, as Hiccup posed his muscular frame. A choir of gasps filled the great hall as all the villagers stared at the painting.

"I...don't...believe it..." Hiccup stammered.

"Of all thuh-"

"Bucket what a marvelous painting!" Stoic interrupted excitedly, moving around Hiccup.

Hiccup just stood, anchored to the spot, staring at the picture. The young boy staring back at him had what looked like a taunting smirk on his face. Hiccup's gaze fell to the floor as he felt more heat rush to his cheeks. Glancing up he saw everyone in the room had stopped their murmuring and were sizing Hiccup up to the mural. Hiccup swallowed hard as he braced himself for the worst.

A hand on his shoulder cause him to jar backwards slightly. Looking up he saw his father standing next to him.

"Well?" Stoic asked.

"What'd ya think Hiccup?"

Hiccup saw a broad smile work it's way across Stoic's face. It was something Hiccup truly enjoyed. He rarely saw his father smile, if ever. But the battle against the Green Death had changed all that. Out of pure fear, Hiccup fought for every chance he could get his father to smile with the utmost ferocity. This was no exception.

"How do I tell him I hate...all this..." Hiccup thought to himself.

"Hiccup?" Stoic asked again.

"I...It's not...me!" Hiccup exclaimed quietly.

"What do you mean it's not you...?" Stoic asked.

"Just look at it!" Hiccup yelled, pulling away from his father.

Stoic turned and looked to the painting, and back to Hiccup.

"Hiccup...I don't understand..." Stoic stated.

In an instant, the smile faded as Stoic reached up and rubbed his temple soothingly. Hiccup had seen that look before. That look meant many things. It meant Stoic was at a loss of what to do. It meant he was getting angry. It meant Hiccup had messed up. Again.

"Dad? I'm very extra sure...that, that... is not me in that picture!" Hiccup yelled.

"Yes it is!" Stoic yelled, his face growing red.

"You just look...bigger...n' stronger..."

"It is NOT...ME!" Hiccup screamed.

All the villagers gasped as Stoic jarred back suddenly. Stoic saw that Hiccup was shuddering as his face was growing very red.

"YOU..." Stoic hissed, moving forward.

"Take...that back...This instant!"

Hiccup stood his ground.

"I...will...not!" Hiccup yelled, clenching his fists.

"Yuh...You don't like muh picture?" Bucket asked, peering around Stoic's shoulders.

Stoic turned around, and faced Bucket. Bucket's face fell as he looked from Hiccup to the drawing, and back to Hiccup. Stoic looked to Hiccup. Hiccup's jaw was set and his hands were balled up tightly at his sides. Stoic was outraged. He thought Hiccup had grown out of that stage. He thought Hiccup had grown up enough to know when to

keep his opinions to himself. Stoic turned and faced Bucket. Placing his hand on Buckets shoulder, he sighed heavily.

"Bucket...I'm so sorry... I didn't mean for..._all this..._to happen..." Stoic stammered, gesturing behind himself to Hiccup.

Hiccup gasped as he heard the utter disappointment saturate his fathers words. The tears suddenly formed as he heard the all to familiar phrase, as he took in the sight of his father apologizing to Bucket.

"If there is ONE THING I'm sorry for..." Hiccup hissed as loudly as he could muster.

All eyes fell upon Hiccup, who was trembling ardently. Stoic turned and faced Hiccup. Stoic gasped as he saw Hiccup's whole body was shaking. He had never seen his son so angry. Hiccup closed his eyes, and took in a deep breath. Stoic blinked as he saw a single tear fall down Hiccup's cheek. Ex-hailing forcefully Hiccup opened his eyes and glared at his father. Stoic cringed as he saw Hiccup's chin quiver. Stoic knew enough to gather the tell-tale sign that Hiccup was very, VERY upset.

"It would be...the day I was EVER BORN!" Hiccup yelled at the top of his lungs.

Stoic felt his knee's falter the moment the words fell from Hiccup's lips. Hiccup slowly began to back away. Stoic looked around and saw the terror that had befallen the villagers faces. Reaching forward, he sought to place his hand on Hiccup's shoulder. Hiccup slinked backwards quickly. Stoic gasped as he saw more tears make their way down Hiccup's face. Hiccup turned suddenly, and ran.

For having only one good leg, Stoic marveled at how quickly Hiccup was able to maneuver himself through the crowd of on lookers. Everyone seemed to bolt out of the way as Stoic pursued Hiccup down the great hall. As he saw Hiccup slip through the great doors, his mind was reeling over what Hiccup had just said. He couldn't believe how insensitive Hiccup had been towards Buckets painting. He swung the front doors open, just in time to see Hiccup leap onto Toothless's back.

"Hiccup!" Stoic yelled.

"Stop!"

Stoic gasped as he saw Hiccup look over his shoulder. Their gaze locked as father and son stared at each other. Hiccup saw his father's expression soften as he descended the stair case quickly. Hiccup slowly shook his head, knowing his father obviously didn't care enough to know that the picture was _not_ what really hurt him.

Stoic reached Hiccup and Toothless, and placed his hands on his knees. Looking up he saw Hiccup was staring down at him.

"You just don't get it...do you?" Hiccup muttered softly.

"Don't get what?" Stoic asked, leaning in and resting his hand atop

Hiccups.

Hiccup tensed as he felt his father's hand atop his own. Stoic gasped as he saw Hiccup look away.

"Help me understand, Hiccup..." Stoic pleaded.

Hiccup turned and stared at his father. Stoic saw Hiccup was trying hard not to cry.

"Why...don't you go ask the _marvelous _painting..." Hiccup stammered.

With a gentle nudge, Hiccup coaxed Toothless to back away. With a giant leap, the two were airborne within seconds. Stoic looked up and fixed his eyes on the every fading figure of his son and his dragon as they flew off towards the woods. Stoic ran out and followed their trajectory as they descended quickly and disappeared almost entirely as the stout tree line hid them from view.

Time seemed to lag onward, as Stoic made his way into the thick of the forrest. Grunting heavily, Stoic walked through the forrest until he came to a hill that lead to a cove. As he came up to the edge of this cove he saw a familiar black form at the bottom.

Stoic walked around until he found a warn path that led down into the cove. Working around the rocks he came to a small space between two large boulders. That's when he heard it. Hiccup in-hailed loudly, and sobbed heavily.

Stoic strained as the squeezed between the boulders and made his way towards Hiccup. He could see Hiccup had his back against a rock, and Toothless just stopped in front of him, with his head bowed sorrowfully.

Reaching the rock, Stoic fell to his knee's as he placed a hand on Hiccup's shoulder. Hiccup gasped mid-sob and looked up. He saw his father kneeling next to him, and immediately tried to stand.

"No!" Stoic yelled, pulling Hiccup back down.

"Hiccup!?"

Stoic paused as Hiccup plunkered back down. No sooner did Hiccup sit down, did he bury his head in hands.

"Why...would you say something..._like THAT _son?" Stoic asked calmly.

Hiccup looked up and glared at his father.

"I've been a disappointment to you since the day I was born, Dad." Hiccup stammered.

"Why should I think that..._all this.."_

Hiccup emphasized the phrase, and gestured to himself while trying to flex his muscles.

"Would be _any different..." _Hiccup stammered.

"Hiccup...I..." Stoic stuttered.

"You wish I wasn't your son...I get it!" Hiccup yelled.

"Now, wait just a minute...That's not truh-" Stoic yelled.

"Yes it IS!" Hiccup interrupted, standing suddenly.

Hiccup began to pace back and forth as he yelled. Toothless rose and sauntered over and began to follow Hiccup.

"I saw the way you admired that...That _painting..." _Hiccup hissed.

Stoic stared at his son, as he began to realize where he'd made his error.

"I'm just...just..." Hiccup uttered, stopping.

Looking up Hiccup felt more tears fall as he spoke.

"I'm just sorry...Sorry for not being the son you deserve...The son who's brave, who is strong, and-"

Hiccup stopped, and turned his back to his father.

"Hiccup...?" Stoic asked rising to a stand.

"You...gestured to _all of me_ as you apologized to Bucket..." Hiccup sobbed.

"You...are _still_ embarrassed to have me as your son..."

Stoic flinched as he saw Hiccup's shoulders shake. Toothless sat next to Hiccup and gave him a nudge. Stoic saw Hiccup's hand rise and rest atop the dragons head. Gingerly Stoic made his way towards Hiccup. Stoic sighed as he placed his hand atop Hiccup's shoulder.

"The Great Stoic the Vast...and his _toothpick sized, pathetic excuse for a son..."_ Hiccup sobbed.

"Hiccup...I-" Stoic stammered.

"You would be...so much happier...If I was never born..." Hiccup stated sadly.

"Hiccup Horrendous Haddock..." Stoic boomed, shaking Hiccup's shoulders.

Before he could stop him, Hiccup felt Stoic whirl him around. He cringed, and closed his eyes. He was sure his father was going to be very angry at him. Peering through one eye, Hiccup gasped as he saw the look Stoic bore on his face.

Tears were streaming down Stoic's face as he stared at his son. He had never heard Hiccup utter such sorrowful words in all his life.

"Don't...You dare...say that!" Stoic stammered, half yelling.

"One of the greatest joys...In my life...has been having you...As a son...Oden it was rough in the earlier years... But I really thought we'd moved past ..._all that..._"

"Then why...For the love of Thor, did you _not _realize how much that painting hurts me?" Hiccup blubbered, more tears falling.

"Hiccup I don-" Stoic stated.

"You liked that painting...You liked it so much that you turned your back on your _real _son! Of all the things you could do...to _hurt me..." _Hiccup interrupted.

Stoic gasped as he saw Hiccup pull his lips in and look away.

"I thought you...would understand..." Hiccup blubbered.

"I really wish I was stronger...had more muscles...But it's just-"

Stoic put both hands on Hiccup's shoulders and pulled him into a hug.

"Oh...Son..." Stoic stammered.

Hiccup burst into tears as Stoic held Hiccup tighter. Stoic cringed as Hiccup's lamentations burst forward. Stoic gasped as he realized that he was in the same place he'd been in before the battle against the Green Death. Back then he hadn't listened to his son. And for that decision, Hiccup had almost died. Stoic released his hold on Hiccup and knelt down. Placing his hands on Hiccup shoulders he strained to read the look that had etched it's way across his son's face. Hiccup's face remained taught as he stared down at the ground. His nostrils flared as he breathed deeply. Stoic could tell Hiccup was trying not to cry.

Hiccup gasped as he felt his father release his hold, and stand. Hiccup suddenly realized his father was about to walk away. Hiccup summoned all his strength to quell his sorrow until his father was out of ear shot. He heard the rustle of his father's tunic. Something wasn't adding up. Curiously, Hiccup stole a glance at his father. Hiccup's eyes grew wide as he saw his father blatantly staring right at him. His father's face bore a sorrowful expression, but Hiccup was sure he saw his father nod slightly.

"Feel better...?" Stoic asked.

A single sob fell from Hiccup's mouth as he felt his father shake his shoulders gently. He shook his head ever so slightly.

"Yuh...You're not gonnah...leave...me?" Hiccup blubbered.

"Hiccup..." Stoic stammered, pulling him into another hug.

"Why would you ever think-"

A single sob from Hiccup, cut off Stoic's sentence. He felt Hiccup bury his face in the crook of his giant arm as the sorrow seemed to

pull him downward. Hiccup's entire frame was shuddering violently as he continued to weep ardently. Silently Stoic began to smooth Hiccup's hair as he tried to calm his son. Suddenly it dawned on Stoic. He didn't know why he hadn't thought of it before.

Stoic realized that Hiccup had been the object of ridicule for most of his life. Stoic recounted a time in particular when he heard of one of Hiccup's many disasters as a young viking. Through out the day he'd heard various villagers poke fun at Hiccup's small stature. Even Gober had admired to having and inside joke with Hiccup about his _toothpick _sized frame. That night Stoic had awoken to the sound of Hiccup's blood curtiling scream. Stoic nearly tripped on the last stair as he reached Hiccup's bedside. Hiccup was thrashing about wildly as a nightmare tightened it's grip on the boy's mind. All though Hiccup was rolling from side to side, he spoke almost fluently as his feverish dream tightened it's grip. Stoic tried to soothe Hiccup, but it was hours before Hiccup finally calmed down and fell into an peaceful sleep. The words Hiccup had uttered in his thrashing about where what stabbed at Stoic's heart. As he held tightly to Hiccup, and listened to Hiccup's lamentation's he couldn't help the words that echoed in his mind.

"Everything...I touch..turns to ashes"

_ "...I am worthless, pathetic, and...and..."_

_ "...Useless..."_

Stoic shook his head slightly, as he fought the urge to shudder violently. Looking down he could see Hiccup was breathing evenly, but Stoic could feel Hiccup's whole body was tense. Stoic then realized that had wrapped his arms around Stoic's neck and was holding tightly. He could feel Hiccup's arms buckling as the wrapped around the bulk of his beard.

"I'm not going...anywhere son.." Stoic stated suddenly.

Hiccup whimpered as he nodded slowly. Stoic felt Hiccup's hold tighten around his neck. Stoic tightened his hug, and held Hiccup close. Suddenly he heard Hiccup groan.

"Can't breathe...Dad..." Hiccup mumbled.

Releasing his son Stoic stood back. For a moment father and son stared at each other. Stoic placed his hand on Hiccup's shoulder.

"Hiccup...I am so...SO sorry..." Stoic stammered, his voice crackling.

"You'd think I'd of learned by now...I just..."

Stoic's voice trailed off as he shook his head.

"I know Dad..." Hiccup stammered.

"I'm still getting used to having you...having you..."

Hiccup grew quiet, as his gaze fell to the ground.

"Hiccup?" Stoic asked tenderly.

Hiccup shook his head not wanting to continue.

"Hiccup...Please son...Don't shut me out!" Stoic pleaded.

Looking up Hiccup saw the tears brimming in his father's eyes. It tugged at Hiccup's heart strings as he saw his father's attention was solely focused on him. Hiccup bit his lips as he felt the tears sting his eyes. He was afraid to ruin such a tender moment.

"Having me...what?" Stoic prompted softly, swallowing loudly.

Stoic winced as he felt Hiccup's whole body tense. It was as if Hiccup was bracing himself for another let down. For more disappointment. Suddenly Stoic realized Hiccup was fighting ferociously with himself. He could sense the inner turmoil as saw the tears that threatened to spill over.

"Huh...having you ..._care...about...me..." _Hiccup whimpered.

Stoic flinched as he heard Hiccup's voice break. All though the words stung, Stoic felt his chest swell with love. Here was Hiccup, feeling comfortable enough to let his guard down. Hiccup was summoning every ounce of courage to tell him what was truly on his mind.

Hiccup gasped as he saw his father's brow furrow suddenly. What he feared most had happened at his own hand. Hiccup hung his head, sniffing loudly. Stoic placed his other hand on Hiccup's other shoulder, and spoke softly.

"Son?" Stoic asked.

A quiet sob fell from Hiccup. Hiccup's shoulders shook as the grief surrounded his mind and began to pull him down. Stoic strained as he scanned every inch of Hiccup's tiny frame, trying to read Hiccup's demeanor. Hiccup continued to sob, as he shook his back and forth slowly.

"I'm...sorry...Dad..." Hiccup trilled sadly.

"No, Hiccup..." Stoic chided.

Hiccup gasped, as he looked up suddenly. Stoic sighed and closed his eyes as he spoke.

"Hiccup...I'm the one who should be apologizing..."

Hiccup just stared at his father. He couldn't believe the words that had just come out of his father's mouth.

"I..am... suh-"

Stoic paused, and pulled Hiccup into a hug. Stoic's heart broke as he felt Hiccup tense from within his grasp.

"I am SO sorry son..." Stoic rasped.

Stoic braced himself. Hiccup was quiet, and Stoic could tell he was processing the words he had just heard. Suddenly Stoic Hiccup clasp

on to his tunic and hold tightly to it. He couldn't help the sob that fell from his lips as he felt Hiccup return the hug.

"_I forgive you...Dad.." _Hiccup whimpered, holding tighter to Stoic.

Stoic hugged Hiccup tighter, and the dam burst. Stoic sniffed loudly as the silent cries flooded forward. Hiccup gasped as he looked up, and saw his father crying. Reaching up he clasped his arms around his father's neck and summoned all the strength he could muster. Stoic caught his breath as he heard Hiccup groaning. He then realized that Hiccup was hugging him so tightly, he was shaking violently. He rubbed Hiccup's back soothingly, as he breathed in deeply.

"Dad?" Hiccup asked, his voice trembling might-ally.

Partting their embrace, Stoic wiped his eyes with the back of his hand.

"Feel better?" Hiccup asked quietly.

Stoic couldn't help but chuckle as he heard Hiccup return the question. Stoic then noted, that a faint smile had etched it's way upon Hiccup's face. Stoic smiled in return as he felt the weight lift of his shoulders. Stoic realized, that when Hiccup smiled it made him feel like he really _was _getting better in his role as a father.

Stoic sighed contentedly, and looked to Hiccup. He nodded as he reached up and wiped a stray tear from his cheek. Hiccup's smile beamed even broader as he relaxed his shoulders. Stoic saw Hiccup smile, and he knew that they would be all right. Stoic would get better at being the father Hiccup needed.

As Hiccup saw his father's expression soften, and saw the smile don his face he could sense that his father was truly happy with him. He could see the love in his father's eyes and knew that Stoic really did love him. And that, was all that Hiccup needed.

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